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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR; JOINT  
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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [KWBG](#) [KJUS](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: AMBITION, LIMITATIONS IN EVIDENCE AT WEST BANK  
AREA B POLICE STATION

Classified By: Consul General Daniel H. Rubinstein for reasons  
1.4 (b,d).

11. Summary: PolOffs visited the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) station in the West Bank village of al-Mughayyer in the aftermath of September 3-4 clashes between Palestinian villagers and Israeli settlers from a nearby outpost. The visit illustrated a gap between PCP ambitions and capabilities in Area B. End Summary.

12. (C) On September 10, PolOffs visited the PCP station in al-Mughayyer, an Area B locality separated from the settlement of Shilo and neighboring Palestinian villages by corridors of Area C territory. (Note: Area B land is designated as under joint Israeli-Palestinian Authority control; Area C remains under sole Israeli control.) Police Chief Mohammed Abu Bakr received PolOffs in his eighteen-month-old station headquarters, a wood-panelled shipping container furnished with European donations. (The previous police station closed during the second Intifada.) Abu Bakr noted that his force of fifteen officers, which serves approximately 70,000 Palestinians, was equipped with five AK-47s, a pistol, and a small Mitsubishi truck. The station, he explained, had no independent operational budget, relying on Ramallah for essential logistics and supplies, such as its fax machine, computer, printer, and coffeemaker.

13. (C) The al-Mughayyer station's area of responsibility covers fifteen Area B villages bisected by bands of Area C (IDF-only) territory, which the Palestinian police cannot transit in uniform or while carrying a weapon without prior IDF permission. Many arrests thus require an advance phone call to the Israeli District Coordination Office (DCO), with response times ranging from a half-hour to a day. Asked how his force handles scenarios in which criminals take refuge in Area C to evade capture, Abu Bakr said, "we have to coordinate." When the other policemen gathered in the room started to laugh, he conceded "they do what they need to do. In extreme situations, they go in (to Area C) in civilian clothing, with their own (civilian) IDs (to make the arrest)."

14. (C) Abu Bakr said that direct coordination with the IDF was minimal. "They are here (in Area B) on a daily basis, for arrests, for information," he said. "They come in day and night. At night, they call to tell us to stay inside. But we have no personal contacts with them. We go through the DCO, by telephone." The station's isolation was evident in its belated response to events on September 3-4, when settlers from an outpost near Shiloh reportedly cut down 250 olive and fig trees on Palestinian land. Palestinian villagers retaliated by marching towards the outpost to confront the perpetrators, with some property damage resulting. According to press reports, the IDF dispersed the crowd, and no injuries were reported. "We found out the next day from the Israeli forces," Abu Bakr said, "when they

called us -- and when the local residents came to us with (property) claims for us to file with the Israeli DCO."

¶5. (C) Abu Bakr seemed realistic about his force's current limitations. Asked whether he saw a need to expand his force, he nodded. "Of course," he said. "We're sitting in a trailer. We'd like the Europeans to come, and build us a concrete facility." Still, he was effusive in praising his station's performance. "There has been significant improvement in the past two years in terms of law and order. Criminals have second thoughts. They know we have a vibrant force, that we can act."

¶6. (C) Abu Bakr insisted on police primacy over other PA security forces. "We as the police are number one," he said, "and the people understand and appreciate that." Abu Bakr also praised PCP Commander Major General Hazim Attallah. "Since Hazim took over," he said, "we have got everywhere very young officers, enthusiastic officers, at leadership positions in stations. It's good."

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